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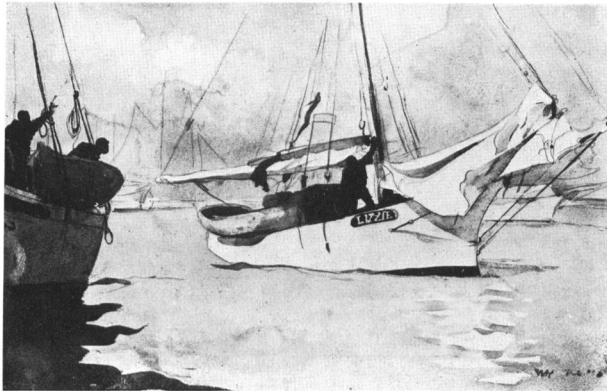
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as at least one marvelously lifelike piece of animal painting. And in all these pictures we have the same sincerity of purpose, the same simplicity of composition. These qualities are also true of his early paintings—studies of camp life and negro scenes.

The group of twenty-seven water colors was most interesting and formed an important feature of the exhibition.\* Particularly delightful were those made in the Bermudas and Bahamas and on the coast of Florida; here the severity and ruggedness of the North have given

\*At the Pan-American Exposition Homer chose to be represented only by his water colors.

place to the brilliant sunshine of the South. Joyous and brilliant notes these are, rapidly set down in broad, vigorous washes. Homer thoroughly understood both the possibilities and limitations of the water color as a medium of artistic expression; his drawings were executed in precisely the right manner and he never strained his medium. Sargent, with his strong and masterful color notes made in Venice, so engagingly unconventional in subject, and Whistler, with his water colors, in turn all that is delicate and suggestive, also understood, like Homer, that elaboration only removes all that is fresh and charming in a water color.



FISHING BOATS, KEY WEST

WINSLOW HOMER

## THE DECORATION OF THE PAULIST CHURCH

BY WILLIAM LAUREL HARRIS

SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF MURAL PAINTERS

THERE is in the ancient Sanscrit a proverb which says "Words are the daughters of earth and deeds are the sons of heaven." This is so very true in art that I dread to multiply the sounding words and noisy terms of art talk.

It is, therefore, with the greatest diffidence and trepidation that I leave my paints and brushes to take up my rusty pen. Indeed, I would not write, but that my subject is an epoch-making church, the Church of Saint Paul the Apostle.



HIGH ALTAR

STANFORD WHITE

This venerable building stands at 59th Street and Columbus Avenue, which is now a crowded and busy center of the metropolitan life, but when it was planned by a few poor priests, the neighborhood was a place of shanties, goats, and truck gardens.

The Missionary Society of Saint Paul the Apostle was incorporated in 1858, but the foundations of the church about which I write were not laid till 1875. The man who fixed its general propor-

tions was Father Isaac Hecker. It was he who determined upon the following astounding dimensions: inside length 262 feet, width 106 feet, over 90 feet to the crown of the chancel arch and with a clear span in the nave of 60 feet.

No wonder when this great edifice began to rise the outsiders said "they mean well, these Paulist Fathers, but they are as mad as March Hares."

Very fortunately there was among the Paulists a man of considerable practical

experience in heavy construction, and a man who had full confidence in the far-seeing genius of his superior. This was Father George Deshon, who, in spite of a somewhat French sounding name, was a Yankee from the Nutmeg State. He had graduated with high honors at West Point, had served as commander of ordnance and as professor of military engineering. And what Father Hecker dreamed Father Deshon built in cement and granite.

Thus the Church of Saint Paul grew huge in bulk, formidable in proportion, and with granite walls 8 feet thick, till it was laughingly called Father Deshon's fort. And it was a fort where noble men withstood the pernicious influences of their time, where great artists and pious people combined to withstand the commercial spirit of the day. And the difficulties were real and strong.

As I write I have before me the original drawings for the church made by an unthinking sort of an architect who failed to catch the spirit of the scheme. And as far as I can see not one single feature of the original drawing presented is to be found in the finished church. Such radical changes of course made harsh friction.

One by one the erroneous propositions were overruled by Father Hecker as he lay in his invalid's bed. One by one the ideas of Father Hecker were adopted and built in stone by Father Deshon, who soon became the architect in charge. Nor were they without expert advice. Three men came frequently to talk with Father Hecker in a friendly way; they were Augustus Saint Gaudens, Stanford White, and John La Farge. These three names were not at that time so very famous, but now they are names to conjure with.

From the start Father Hecker wished his church to be not only a religious foundation of great repute, but also a very vital monument of American Art.

In this the great founder of the Paulists was not to be disappointed, though he could not live to see the work completed, yet even in his day it showed the possibilities of church building and dec-

oration in America. His was the only Catholic Church in the United States to employ a considerable number of American artists of acknowledged talent.

The three principal altars were designed by McKim, Mead & White. The High Altar in which Stanford White took a great personal interest as designer is the noblest altar in America. It is magnificent in its gold and onyx, in its alabaster and Numidian marble. It is splendid in design, conforming to the ancient Christian traditions; it is worthy of Saint Paul beyond the walls, of Santa Maria Maggiore or Santa Maria Ara Coeli in Rome. This great work of art is in the wonderful and solemn style of the very best period of the Eternal City, of the time when Christian Art was in its first glorious triumph.

No church in America has such a gorgeous array of colored windows; colors equal to the indescribable blues, the jewel-like purples and rare rubies and malachites of Chartres, or of Bourges or of Rheims. I refer to the twenty-two vast windows by John La Farge. Twenty-one of these windows by this great master are in the clerestory, some of them measuring 30 feet by 12 feet in dimensions; the other is the front portal and designed to meet most successfully the difficult architectural requirements of the place.

Above all I admire the two blue windows to the right and left in the sanctuary, which as works in color are second to none in the world. One feels that the incomparable talents of Clemens Carnutensis and of the great Robertus that gave such lasting glory to Chartres lives again and here. Let us pray that time and chance will deal lightly with these glorious windows and that our great-great-grandchildren may look at them and say they were characteristic of our time.

Nine mural panels representing figures of the Angelic Host that are to the right and left of Stanford White's altar are also the work of Mr. La Farge. Three gracious angels cast in bronze, that give an added charm to this altar, were the first commission ever received by the



ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

WILLIAM LAUREL HARRIS

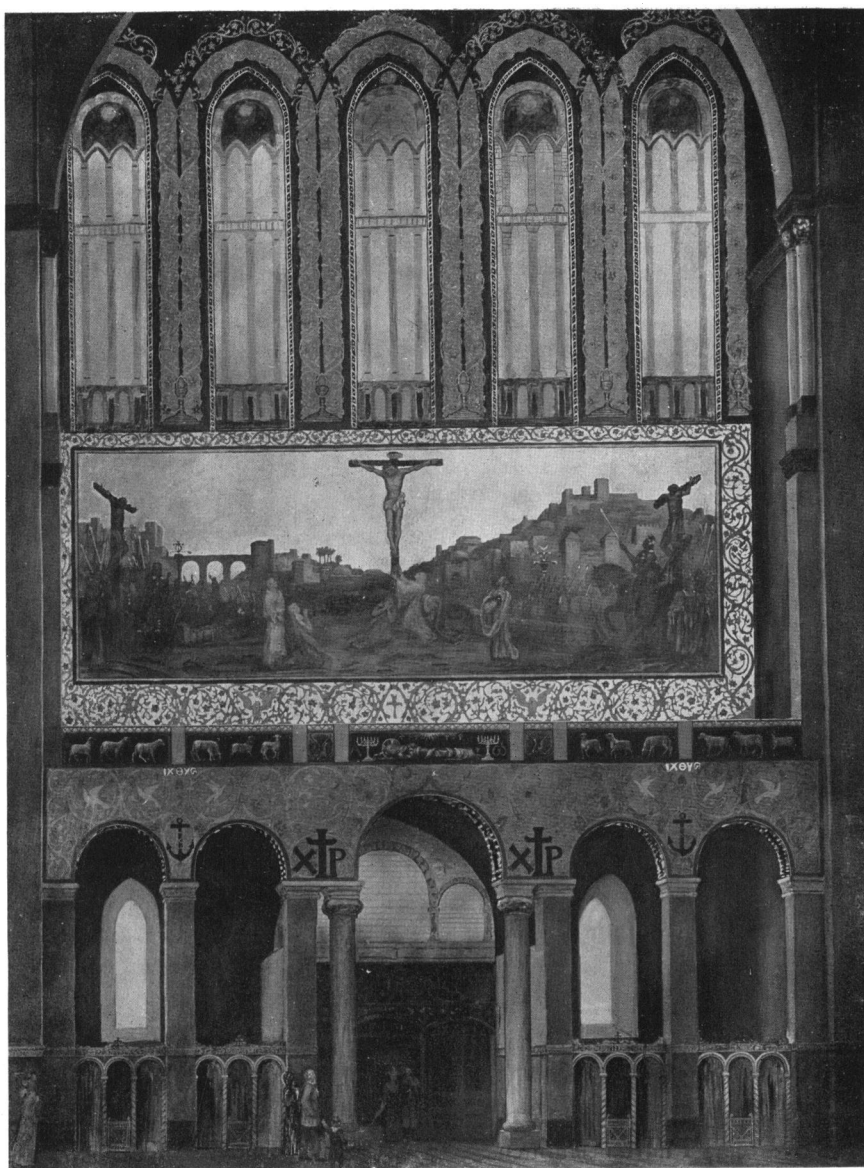
now famous sculptor Frederick Macmonnies. Augustus Saint Gaudens was asked to do the work but was unable to find the time, so he recommended his pupil. Heins and La Farge designed many charming details about the church, including the columns and the Narthex. Philippe Martiny modeled the ponderous sanctuary lamp after a design by Stanford White. Robert Reid painted an altarpiece representing the Martyrdom of Saint Paul, and it is one of the most dignified and beautiful of his many famous pictures. The altarpiece for Saint Catherine's altar is due to the skillful brush of La Marquise de Wentworth. Bela Pratt designed and modeled a statue of the Blessed Virgin for the Chapel of the Annunciation.

And yet in spite of all this successful work by famous artists, in spite of the instructions of Father Hecker and the glorious traditions of ancient art, when

Father Hecker died the whole church came near being ruined; because there had been no general scheme outside that in Father Hecker's mind, and because the ordinary commercial hacks secured a footing even in the sanctuary.

This commercial work went on for several years when there came a sort of revolt on the part of those persons interested in art and church decoration. It was at this critical moment that I was called in and requested to bring order out of confusion, to render beautiful that which was ugly, out of discord to produce harmony; in other words, to save a great undertaking from disaster.

My first effort was to establish a general scheme of color and of proportion, and to evolve a method of harmonizing the clashing elements at my disposal. I adopted for my principal ornamental motive the Parable of the Vine, which gave me elemental beauty and enabled



GENERAL VIEW OF THE NARTHEX. FROM SKETCH BY WILLIAM LAUREL HARRIS

me to gather together the scattered decorative units. The text of the parable is printed in letters of gold on the side walls of each chapel, and the running ornament of the vine connects all and leads the eye towards the High Altar. In each chapel entwined with the vine are those special symbols appropriate to that particular chapel and its patron saint.

Thus in Saint Joseph's Chapel I used the symbols of the carpenter's trade interspersed with the vine and the lily.

In Saint Patrick's Chapel is the shamrock, the Irish ivy and the symbols of the Trinity to which the apostle to Ireland had such a fervent devotion. The number of symbols used is almost endless; to mention all would weary the

reader; though I trust each figure and symbolic design adds an interest to the venerable church.

I have taken it as an axiom that nothing shall be painted in the church unless it has a spiritual purpose and a proper meaning.

The general scheme of decoration provides for every square foot of wall space in the whole vast edifice.

Of the work now finished the most important pictures are as follows: A series of sixteen figures, part of twenty-two saints and prophets selected to show the continuity in Christian teaching—the large decoration in the Lady Chapel, Saint Joseph's Chapel, Saint Patrick's Chapel, Saint Agnes' Chapel and the large Crucifixion over the Narthex.

This last is a decorative panel fifty-five feet long and some twenty feet high, representing the last moments on Calvary. The agony over, the soldiers and people are hurrying to the city before nightfall; the executioner breaks the legs of the thieves so as to be at liberty to go with the others. It was a moment when the faith of the disciples must have reached its lowest ebb, when feeble Christianity seemed crushed by mighty Paganism. Saint John had received his instructions to care for the Blessed Mother, Mary Magdalen and the other Marys were clinging to the foot of the cross; and Joseph of Aramathea and Nicodemus approached to care for the body of their dead Master. It is intended that the people turning to leave the church shall have this last and vital impression fixed upon their minds and imagination.

Little idea of the amount of work done in the twelve years I have been in charge can be gathered from the illustrations that accompany this article, because of the tremendous amount of ornamental detail that has taken up my time. This ornamental work was most important as a means of unifying the general effect of the building with its varied features.

The future pictures to be painted are even more important than those which I have already finished and are more numerous. In the laying out of the decorative scheme I have returned to the

time-honored traditions of Christian Art as exemplified in the Basilicas of Rome and Ravenna, and the Monastic churches of Monreale and Assisi. Many unjustified innovations crept into church decoration in the latter centuries. For instance, the placing of important compositions representing the Crucifixion in the Sanctuary is contrary to the best traditions both of Art and Christian teaching. For that reason I have put my Crucifixion over the Narthex as was done in most ancient times, as we see still in the twelfth century cathedral at Torcello. The Sanctuary should be reserved for the glories of the second coming of Christ, for the beauteous Angelic host and all the angels and archangels. Examples of this arrangement are to be seen in Ravenna, Monreale and Cefalu.

A great work that the Paulist Fathers inaugurated many years ago was the revival of the Gregorian chant and the real spirit of religious music. This reform we now see very fortunately brought to a victorious conclusion. In church decoration the same sort of abuses exist that existed in church music. These abuses sprang from vulgar ostentation and from the secularization of art in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In these abuses a student of artistic history can trace the influence of many an infamous person and many a vicious tyrant. Let us hope, however, that the reform in church decoration instituted by the Paulist Fathers will be even more successful than their reforms in church music. It will mean much to American art. Many are the efforts made to better our artists and to create a National Art. But none of these efforts has in it such very solid possibilities of success as has this movement for better church decoration. For three centuries the clergy and the artists have been separated by an impassable chasm, a chasm which opened amid the social, political and religious upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And it is for us a patriotic wish and a laudable desire to bridge this chasm over until Art and Religion can once more walk hand in hand.